

Offer Versus Serve in School with a Pre-Pack System

Purpose:

This instruction sets forth the policy regarding the Offer versus Serve provision in pre-plated or prepackaged meal service systems.

Scope:

Sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Description:

Schools with a pre-plate delivery system are allowed to implement Offer versus Serve to the extent possible as long as students take at least three full portions. For example:

1. SFAs which package four components together and the milk (or other item) separately, may implement Offer versus Serve with only the milk (or other component) as the item of choice. When possible, the SFA should find an alternative to the service system so more choices are available. This may be possible in bag lunch situations. The SFA may be able to lay out the components separately on a serving line, allowing the students to make and bag their own choices.
2. SFAs which offer a "hot pack," a "cold pack," and milk each day may also implement Offer versus Serve.
 - a. SFAs which offer a two-item cold pack, a two-item hot pack, and milk allow the most choice. A child can refuse the cold pack, the hot pack, or the milk and still select a reimbursable lunch for a three-item Offer versus Serve lunch. If the SFA implements a four item Offer versus Serve, only the milk could be refused.
 - b. SFAs which offer a three-item pack, a one-item pack, and milk each day allow the children to refuse the one-item pack or the milk for a four-item Offer versus Serve. Or, if the SFA has a three-item Offer versus Serve, both the one-item pack and the milk could be refused.
 - c. SFAs which vary the number of items in the hot and cold packs each day would have the most difficulty implementing Offer versus Serve. The servers must determine on a daily basis which "packs" the children could refuse and still select a reimbursable meal.

In the situation where the child may refuse more than one type of component or "pack" and still have a reimbursable meal, the SFA may not mandate which of the components or packs the child may refuse.

SOURCE: LETTER DATED APRIL 11, 1990, FROM RUSS CIRCO, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE.